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5 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
6 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

7  
8 MARCUS L. HARRISON,  
9 Plaintiff,  
10 v.  
11 INSTITUTIONAL GANG OF  
12 INVESTIGATIONS; et al.,  
13 Defendants.

No. C 07-3824 SI (pr)

**ORDER DENYING DEFENDANTS'  
MOTION FOR SUMMARY  
JUDGMENT**

14  
15 **INTRODUCTION**  
16 Marcus L. Harrison, a California prisoner, filed this pro se civil rights action under 42  
17 U.S.C. § 1983 asserting a First Amendment claim regarding the confiscation of some of his  
18 outgoing and incoming mail. Defendants moved for summary judgment and plaintiff opposed  
19 the motion. For the reasons discussed below, defendants' motion for summary judgment will be  
20 denied.

21

22 **BACKGROUND**

23 Harrison alleged in his complaint that Pelican Bay officials violated his First Amendment  
24 rights by misapplying the prison regulations and confiscating incoming and outgoing mail  
25 pertaining to, among other things, the Black August memorial, the New Afrikan Collective  
26 Think Tank, the George Jackson University and the New Afrikan Institute of Criminology 101.  
27 Complaint, p. 6. Defendants do not deny that Harrison's outgoing mail was confiscated, but  
28 contend that the confiscation was permissible because the materials confiscated pertained to

1 events and organizations affiliated with the Black Guerilla Family, a prison gang of which  
2 Harrison is a member. Harrison denies that the materials are gang-related and urges that the  
3 entities and organizations discussed exist "to promote educational, social, cultural, [and] political  
4 awareness from the viewpoints of the New Afrikan." Complaint, p. 8.

5 The following facts are undisputed unless otherwise noted.

6 Harrison has been validated as a member of the Black Guerilla Family prison gang  
7 ("BGF"). As a result of his validation, he is housed in the security housing unit at Pelican Bay  
8 indefinitely.

9 Defendant Devan Hawkes is a correctional counselor II, specialist at Pelican Bay. He  
10 investigates gang activity, develops and implements gang management strategies, and answers  
11 appeals filed by inmates. He also assists in the classification of gang affiliates for housing and  
12 programming at the prison. Defendant G. Stewart is a correctional counselor I in the SHU at  
13 Pelican Bay. Both defendants are part of Pelican Bay's institutional gang investigations unit.

14

15 A. The BGF Prison Gang

16 The "primary goal of prison gangs, which are highly organized entities that have a clear  
17 power structure, is to undermine the safety of individuals inside and outside of the prison."  
18 Hawkes Decl., ¶ 6. As a result of intelligence gathered over the years, prison officials have  
19 obtained information about the BGF and certain other entities. Hawkes stated the following  
20 about BGF: "The BGF is a prison gang that arose out of a 1960's movement co-founded by  
21 George Jackson. At the time that the gang was established, one of its stated goals was the  
22 overthrow of the United States government. The gang established the 'Black August' observance  
23 to honor deceased members of both the Black Movement and the BGF. Black August is  
24 observed by both present and former BGF members and is promoted by BGF affiliates (ex-  
25 felons) residing in the community. During Black August, members of the BGF advocate  
26 retaliation against correctional officers and others for the deaths of BGF 'comrades' who have  
27 allegedly been murdered by prison officials." Hawkes Decl., ¶ 7. Black August has 31 days of

1 fasting with days of particular importance for deceased Black Movement and BGF members,  
2 several of whom were prisoners allegedly killed by correctional staff.

3 The prison's gang investigations unit has, through interviews with inmates and  
4 confiscation of materials, learned about connections between the BGF and other entities.

5 [The unit] has learned that the gang is attempting to use other groups and entities as  
6 "cover" to lend respectability to the BGF, and facilitate communication between BGF  
7 affiliates. For example, former BGF members have reported that the New Afrikan  
8 Revolutionary Nationalist, New Afrikan Collective Think Tank, the George Jackson  
University, and the New Afrikan Institute of Criminology 101 are entities that promote  
the BGF. References to those entities have been found in both the cells of BGF members  
and among the community contacts that are associated with BGF members.

9 Hawkes Decl., ¶ 9.

10 Hawkes also described information his gang investigations unit had learned about the  
11 dragon's symbolism for the BGF.

12 The testimony of former BGF members indicates that the dragon is a symbol of the BGF.  
13 That testimony is supported by documents discovered in the cells of BGF members and  
14 associates. For example, BGF members refer to Jeffrey Gaulden as 'Joka Khatari.' The  
15 term 'Joka' means 'dragon' in Swahili. Furthermore, a BGF cadre reserved for the upper  
ranks of the gang is called the 'Joka' or 'Dragon' cadre, and images of a dragon wrapped  
around a tower are among several tattoos and emblems recognized by the BGF.

16 Id. at ¶ 10.

17 Based on materials obtained from BGF members by prison officials, defendants believe  
18 that the BGF is committed to an armed revolutionary struggle against the California Department  
19 of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Defendants point out that in one document, a BGF member  
20 described himself as an "extremist," called for "extreme measures to solve extreme problems,"  
21 and urged that "by no stretch of the imagination can we hope to overthrow so determined an  
22 enemy without force." Motion, p. 4, citing Complaint, Ex. B. However, this was not a  
23 document in Harrison's mail, but rather was a document obtained in 1992 that was among the  
24 materials that prison officials had seen that led them to their conclusions about BGF's danger.

25 **B. Regulations Related to Prison Gangs and Inmate Mail**

26 The California Code of Regulations defines a "prison gang" as any gang with its roots or  
27 origins within the CDCR or any other prison system. 15 Cal. Code Regs. § 3000. A primary

1 goal of prison gangs is to undermine the safety of individuals inside and outside of the prison.  
2 Decl. D. Hawkes ¶ 6. "Inmates and parolees shall not knowingly promote, further or assist any  
3 gang as defined under section 3000." 15 Cal. Code Regs. § 3023(a). An inmate qualifies for an  
4 indeterminate term in a SHU if he is a validated member or associate of a prison gang. Decl. D.  
5 Hawkes ¶ 6.

6 The regulations prohibit mailing gang-related materials and other contraband. 15 Cal.  
7 Code Regs. §§ 3006, 3136. Any material reasonably deemed to be a threat to a legitimate  
8 penological interest is classified as contraband. Id. at §3006(c)(16). The regulations direct  
9 prison staff not to permit an inmate to send or receive mail which, in their judgment, has any  
10 characteristics listed in section 3006(c). Id. at § 3136(a).

11

12 C. Harrison's Confiscated Mail and Administrative Appeals

13 Several items were seized by prison officials from Harrison's outgoing mail: (1) three  
14 manila envelopes containing five type-written pages pertaining to Black August addressed to  
15 Kathleen Cleaver, Prison & Parole Studies Project and Friends of Marilyn Buck; (2) two letters  
16 regarding Black August addressed to Black Brigade and Voices in Black Newsletter; (3) a letter  
17 promoting the New Afrikan Revolutionary Nationalism, the New Afrikan Collective Think  
18 Tank, and the New Afrikan Institute of Criminology addressed to Coalition Against Police  
19 Abuse and (4) one manila envelope containing a drawing of a dragon addressed to "My Favorite  
20 Lil Sista C/O Hannah Bastienne." Compl., Exs. A-D.

21 Prison officials also intercepted some incoming mail to Harrison, apparently including  
22 an envelope containing pictures of George Jackson, Joanne Chesimard (also known as Assata  
23 Shakur), Malcolm X, Nat Turner, and others, which Harrison had previously sent out for  
24 copying. Compl., Ex F. The exhibit indicates that the mail eventually was delivered to Harrison  
25 after he filed an inmate appeal. Id. It is unclear from the exhibit whether there was other mail  
26 that was not delivered to Harrison.

27 After intercepting Harrison's mail, prison officials issued a "notification of disapproval -  
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1 mail/packages/publications" that explained why the materials were being withheld. See, e.g.,  
2 Compl., Ex. B. A "gang information chrono" was also issued which stated that Pelican Bay's  
3 institutional gang investigations unit had reviewed the relevant mail, and that the promotion of  
4 Black August, the New Afrikan Collective Think Tank, the George Jackson University and the  
5 New Afrikan Institute of Criminology 101 in those materials demonstrated Harrison's active  
6 affiliation with the BGF prison gang. Id.

7

## 8 VENUE AND JURISDICTION

9 Venue is proper in the Northern District of California because the events or omissions  
10 giving rise to the claims occurred at Pelican Bay State Prison in Del Norte County, which is  
11 located within the Northern District. See 28 U.S.C. §§ 84, 1391(b). This court has federal  
12 question jurisdiction over this action brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. See 28 U.S.C. § 1331.

13

## 14 LEGAL STANDARD FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT

15 Summary judgment is proper where the pleadings, discovery and affidavits show that  
16 there is "no genuine issue as to any material fact and [that] the moving party is entitled to  
17 judgment as a matter of law." Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(c). A court will grant summary judgment  
18 "against a party who fails to make a showing sufficient to establish the existence of an element  
19 essential to that party's case, and on which that party will bear the burden of proof at trial . . .  
20 since a complete failure of proof concerning an essential element of the nonmoving party's case  
21 necessarily renders all other facts immaterial." Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 322-23  
22 (1986). A fact is material if it might affect the outcome of the lawsuit under governing law, and  
23 a dispute about such a material fact is genuine "if the evidence is such that a reasonable jury  
24 could return a verdict for the nonmoving party." Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242,  
25 248 (1986).

26 Generally, when a party challenges the merits of the opponent's claim, the moving party  
27 bears the initial burden of identifying those portions of the record which demonstrate the absence  
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1 of a genuine issue of material fact. The burden then shifts to the nonmoving party to "go beyond  
2 the pleadings, and by his own affidavits, or by the 'depositions, answers to interrogatories, or  
3 admissions on file,' designate 'specific facts showing that there is a genuine issue for trial.'"  
4 Celotex, 477 U.S. at 324 (citations omitted).

5 A verified complaint may be used as an opposing affidavit under Rule 56, as long as it  
6 is based on personal knowledge and sets forth specific facts admissible in evidence. Schroeder  
7 v. McDonald, 55 F.3d 454, 460 & nn.10-11 (9th Cir. 1995) (treating plaintiff's verified  
8 complaint as opposing affidavit where, even though verification not in conformity with 28  
9 U.S.C. § 1746, plaintiff stated under penalty of perjury that contents were true and correct, and  
10 allegations were not based purely on his belief but on his personal knowledge). The complaint  
11 was made under penalty of perjury and therefore is considered as evidence.

12 The court's function on a summary judgment motion is not to make credibility  
13 determinations or weigh conflicting evidence with respect to a disputed material fact. See T.W.  
14 Elec. Serv. v. Pacific Elec. Contractors Ass'n, 809 F.2d 626, 630 (9th Cir. 1987). The evidence  
15 must be viewed in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party, and inferences to be drawn  
16 from the facts must be viewed in a light most favorable to the nonmoving party. Id. at 631.

## 18 DISCUSSION

19 "[L]awful incarceration brings about the necessary withdrawal or limitation of many  
20 privileges and rights, a retraction justified by the considerations underlying our penal system."  
21 Pell v. Procunier, 417 U.S. 817, 822 (1974) (citing Price v. Johnston, 334 U.S. 266, 285 (1948)).  
22 Prisoners retain those First Amendment rights not inconsistent with their status as prisoners or  
23 with legitimate penological objectives of the corrections system. Id. In evaluating a mail  
24 confiscation claim, the court applies two slightly different tests – the test used for restrictions  
25 on outgoing mail is slightly more difficult for prison officials than the test used for restrictions

1 on incoming mail.<sup>1</sup>

2 A limitation on *outgoing* mail is justified only if the limitation in question (1) "furthers  
3 an important governmental interest unrelated to the suppression of expression," and (2) is "no  
4 greater than necessary or essential" to protect the governmental interest involved. Procurier v.  
5 Martinez, 416 U.S. 396, 413 (1974), overruled on other grounds by Thornburgh v. Abbott, 490  
6 U.S. 401, 413-14 (1989); Barrett v. Belleque, 544 F.3d 1060, 1062 (9th Cir. 2008).

7 As to *incoming* mail, a regulation or practice limiting prisoners' receipt of mail is valid  
8 if it is reasonably related to legitimate penological interests. Thornburgh, 490 U.S. at 413 (citing  
9 Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 89 (1987)); see also Crofton v. Roe, 170 F.3d 957, 959 (9th Cir.  
10 1999). Four factors are to be considered when determining the reasonableness of a prison rule:  
11 (1) whether there is a "valid, rational connection between the prison regulation and the legitimate  
12 governmental interest put forward to justify it," (2) "whether there are alternative means of  
13 exercising the right that remain open to prison inmates," (3) "the impact accommodation of the  
14 asserted constitutional right will have on guards and other inmates and on the allocation of  
15 prison resources generally," and (4) the "absence of ready alternatives", or, in other words,  
16 whether the rule at issue is an "exaggerated response to prison concerns." Turner, 482 U.S. at  
17 89-90.

18 Prison officials are not required to show with certainty that any particular correspondence  
19 would have adverse consequences because they are given some latitude in anticipating the  
20 probable consequences of allowing a certain speech in and out of a prison environment.  
21 Procurier v. Martinez, 416 U.S. at 414; see also Overton v. Bazzetta, 539 U.S. 126, 132 (2003)  
22 (courts owe "substantial deference to the professional judgment of prison administrators.")

23 This court's ability to evaluate the merits of this case is hampered by the fact that neither  
24 party has put in the record the particular documents that were confiscated – if those documents  
25 still exist. Plaintiff submitted some documents that may or may not be the confiscated

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27 <sup>1</sup>Defendants contend that the regulations pertaining to the confiscation of the mail were  
28 proper. Plaintiff does not challenge the regulations, however, so there is no need for the court  
to evaluate the regulations in this action. See Opposition, pp. 3-4.

1 documents, see Complaint, Ex. A, but largely the court must rely on the parties' descriptions of  
2 the documents to do its analysis.

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4 A. Outgoing Mail

5 Confiscation of outgoing mail must further an important or substantial governmental  
6 interest unrelated to the suppression of expression. Procunier v. Martinez, 416 U.S. at 413; see,  
7 e.g., id. (refusal to send letters concerning escape plans or proposed criminal activity would be  
8 an obvious example of justifiable censorship).<sup>2</sup> Prison officials may not censor inmate  
9 correspondence simply to eliminate unflattering or unwelcome opinions or factually inaccurate  
10 statements. Id. Procunier v. Martinez upheld the lower court's decision that invalidated several  
11 regulations regarding outgoing mail, specifically, regulations that allowed "censorship of  
12 statements that 'unduly complain' or 'magnify grievances,' *expression of 'inflammatory political,*  
13 *racial, religious or other views,'* and matter deemed 'defamatory' or 'otherwise inappropriate.'" 416 U.S. at 415 (emphasis added). The Court determined that the prison officials "failed to show that these broad restrictions on prisoner mail were in any way necessary to the furtherance of a governmental interest unrelated to the suppression of expression." Id. With respect to the regulation allowing censorship of the expression of inflammatory views, the Court rejected prison officials' contention that such "'matter clearly presents a danger to prison security.' . . . The regulation, however, is not narrowly drawn to reach only material that might be thought to encourage violence nor is its application limited to incoming letters." Id. at 416. Once the government interest allegedly being protected by the limitation on outgoing mail is identified, then one must consider whether the limitation is no greater than necessary to protect that interest. A tighter fit between governmental interest and the limitation imposed is required for outgoing

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26 <sup>2</sup>The Supreme Court listed with approval certain kinds of outgoing mail that reasonably  
27 might be disallowed: (1) that which might violate postal regulations, e.g., threats, blackmail, or  
28 contraband; (2) that which indicates a plot to escape; (3) that which discusses criminal activities;  
that which indicates that the inmate is running a business while he is in confinement; or (5) that which contains codes or other obvious attempts to circumvent legitimate prison regulations. 416 U.S. at 414 n.14.

1 mail than incoming mail because outgoing mail generally has less serious implications on prison  
2 security than incoming mail due to the fact that, by its nature, outgoing mail typically does not  
3 pose a serious threat to internal prison order and security. See Thornburg v. Abbott, 490 U.S.  
4 401, 411-13 (1989).

5 Defendants have the burden to prove that the confiscation furthered an important  
6 government interest and to prove that the confiscation of materials was no greater than necessary  
7 to protect that interest. Cf. Beard v. Banks, 548 U.S. 521, 530-34 (2006) (putting burden on the  
8 state to show penological interest, and connection between the limitation and the penological  
9 objective when Turner, 482 U.S. 78, applies); Armstrong v. Davis, 275 F.3d 849, 874 (9th Cir.  
10 2001) ("To satisfy Turner, the Board must, at the very least, adduce some penological reason for  
11 its policy at the relevant stage of the judicial proceedings.")

12 Defendants contend that they confiscated the outgoing mail at issue because it posed a  
13 threat to the interests of preserving security and order at the prison. The threat is based on the  
14 connection between the BGF prison gang and the subject matter of the pieces of mail.  
15 Defendants presented evidence that Black August is observed and promoted by BGF, and is a  
16 time during which BGF members advocate retaliation against correctional officers and others.  
17 Defendants presented evidence that the New Afrikan Revolutionary Nationalist, the New  
18 Afrikan Collective Think Tank, the George Jackson University and the New Afrikan Institute  
19 of Criminology promote the BGF. Defendants presented evidence that the dragon is a symbol  
20 of the BGF. See Decl. D. Hawkes ¶¶ 7-10.

21 Defendants have failed to meet their burden to show that the confiscation of Harrison's  
22 outgoing mail was no greater than necessary to protect the asserted interest of prison security and  
23 safety. Defendants do not contend that the intended recipients were in the BGF, or that the  
24 confiscated mail contained any coded message, or that the confiscated mail actually advocated  
25 violence. Defendants urge the mail was properly confiscated because it promoted BGF's "armed  
26 revolutionary struggle" against the CDCR. Defs.' Mot. Summ. J. 9:21-22. Defendants take a  
27 very expansive view of what might "promote" a prison gang's illicit activities and apply it with  
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1 gusto, while the First Amendment requires a more nuanced approach.<sup>3</sup>

2 Defendants appear to contend that a categorical ban on things related to Black August is  
3 proper, as they have not identified any particular statement about Black August in Harrison's  
4 mail that actually "might be thought to encourage violence." Procunier v. Martinez, 416 U.S.  
5 at 416. Black August commemorates some people who prison officials may not think are worthy  
6 of commemorating, but the defendants have not made an adequate showing of such a close  
7 connection between the BGF and Black August that the court could find it undisputed that mail  
8 pertaining to Black August actually presented a danger to prison security or actually encouraged  
9 violence. The parties disagree whether Black August was started by the BGF, and even  
10 defendants state that Black August honors deceased members of "both the Black Movement and  
11 the BGF." Hawkes Decl., ¶ 7.

12 Defendants' showing is even less convincing with regard to the confiscation of materials  
13 pertaining to the New Afrikan Collective Think Thank, the New Afrikan Institute of  
14 Criminology 101, and the George Jackson University. Harrison presents evidence that "the  
15 central focus & objective of the Black August memorial, the New Afrikan Collective Think

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17 <sup>3</sup>A review of published circuit cases both upholding and rejecting censorship indicates  
18 that the courts closely examine the fit between asserted penological interest and the particular  
19 outgoing mail being censored, rather than accept at face-value an assertion by prison officials  
20 that the confiscation serves security or rehabilitation interests. Cases upholding censorship of  
21 outgoing mail include Morgan v. Quarterman, 570 F.3d 663, 667 (5th Cir. 2009) (penological  
22 interest in rehabilitation justified disciplining inmate for sending vulgar note to opposing  
23 counsel, so it was not an impermissible infringement of his First Amendment rights); Koutnik  
24 v. Brown, 456 F.3d 777, 785-86 (7th Cir. 2006) (no First Amendment violation; confiscation of  
25 prisoner's mail to merchandising company urging it to add communist-themed posters to its  
product line and enclosing drawing of swastika with cell bars that had anti-corrections  
department slogan on ground that it had a gang symbol (i.e., the swastika) furthered important  
interest in rehabilitation); Nasir v. Morgan, 350 F.3d 366, 375-76 (3d Cir. 2003) (ban on  
outgoing mail to former prisoners did not violate prisoner's First Amendment rights); and  
Leonard v. Nix, 55 F.3d 370, 374-76 (8th Cir. 1995) (no First Amendment violation in  
disciplinary action taken against prisoner for writing scurrilous comments about warden in letter  
to former inmate but intended to be read by prison staff). Cases finding constitutional violation  
in censorship of outgoing mail include Loggins v. Delo, 999 F.2d 364, 367 (8th Cir. 1993)  
(discipline imposed for outgoing mail that had offensive comments about mailroom clerk  
violated prisoner's First Amendment rights because the offensive language did not implicate  
prison security concerns); and McNamara v. Moody, 606 F.2d 621, 624 (5th Cir. 1979) (refusal  
to mail prisoner's letter in which he wrote to his girlfriend that prison officer had sex with a cat;  
court recognized that the statements were coarse and offensive but rejected prison guard's  
argument that allowing such mail would lead to a "total breakdown" in prison security).

1 Thank (N.A.C.T.T.), the New Afrikan Institute of Criminology 101 (N.A.I.C.) etc. is to promote  
2 educational social, cultural, & political awareness from the viewpoints of the new Afrikan."  
3 Complaint, p. 8. Defendants respond that, even if that is true, "it is a 'social, political and  
4 cultural' movement that promotes the BGF" and they therefore were justified in withholding  
5 Harrison's mail concerning those groups. Reply, p. 2. Defendants think that BGF uses  
6 organizations such as these "as 'cover' to lend respectability to the BGF, and facilitate  
7 communication between BGF affiliates," Hawkes Decl., ¶ 9, but they do not identify any of  
8 these entities as having the anti-prison authority outlook that Black August does, let alone that  
9 any of these entities advocate violence against prison officials. Most importantly, defendants  
10 do not identify any particular statement in these mailings that actually might be thought to  
11 encourage violence. In light of Harrison's plausible statements that these groups promote social,  
12 cultural and political awareness from a "New Afrikan" perspective, plus defendants' statement  
13 that they are used as cover to give the gang respectability, plus the absence of a showing of the  
14 particular evils of any of these groups, there is a concern of the possibility that defendants may  
15 have taken a race-based shortcut and assumed anything having to do with African-American  
16 culture could be banned under the guise of controlling the BGF. Cf. Richardson v. Runnels, No.  
17 07-16736, slip op. 1433, 1442-44 (9th Cir. Jan. 26, 2010).

18 Defendants' showing is least convincing with regard to their confiscation of the outgoing  
19 mail that had a drawing of a dragon on it. The court defers to prison officials' professional  
20 judgment that it was a BGF gang-related symbol, even though Harrison claims it was not a BGF  
21 symbol. See Koutnik, 456 F.3d at 785 (deferring to prison officials' determination that a  
22 drawing of swastika was a gang-related symbol). Doing so does not resolve the matter because  
23 defendants have not identified how the drawing itself might be thought to encourage violence.  
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25 It is not in doubt that prison gangs present a danger to prison safety and security, and that  
26 limiting the activities of these gangs serves an important governmental interest. While prison  
27 officials may well be able to ban possession of the materials within the prison, the particular  
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1 challenge here is to the censorship of the mail as it left the prison, at which point the interests  
2 of the recipients become a consideration. See Procunier v. Martinez, 416 U.S. at 407-09. Even  
3 giving substantial deference to prison officials' professional judgment, the court cannot  
4 conclude, as a matter of law, that there was a sufficiently tight fit between the security interest  
5 and confiscation of these particular pieces of mail to make the confiscation constitutionally  
6 permissible. The motion must be denied with respect to the outgoing mail.

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8 B. Incoming Mail

9 Defendants do not argue that they were entitled to summary judgment with regard to the  
10 confiscation of the incoming mail. In fact, they state that it is "unclear what, if any, incoming  
11 mail was withheld by prison officials." Motion, p. 5. The confiscation of incoming mail was  
12 alleged in the complaint, and Harrison filed an inmate appeal regarding it, see Complaint, Ex.  
13 F, but the facts related to any confiscation of incoming mail are not at all clear. Since the record  
14 is sufficiently undeveloped as to what happened, and defendants failed to present any argument  
15 that they were entitled to summary judgment on this claim by Harrison, the motion is denied  
16 with respect to the incoming mail.

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18 C. Qualified Immunity

19 The defense of qualified immunity protects "government officials . . . from liability for  
20 civil damages insofar as their conduct does not violate clearly established statutory or  
21 constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known." Harlow v. Fitzgerald,  
22 457 U.S. 800, 818 (1982). In Saucier v. Katz, 533 U.S. 194 (2001), the Supreme Court set forth  
23 a two-pronged test to determine whether qualified immunity exists. The court must consider this  
24 threshold question: "Taken in the light most favorable to the party asserting the injury, do the  
25 facts alleged show the officer's conduct violated a constitutional right?" Id. at 201. If no  
26 constitutional right was violated if the facts were as alleged, the inquiry ends and defendants  
27 prevail. See id. If, however, "a violation could be made out on a favorable view of the parties'  
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1 submissions, the next, sequential step is to ask whether the right was clearly established. . . .  
2 'The contours of the right must be sufficiently clear that a reasonable official would understand  
3 that what he is doing violates that right.' . . . The relevant, dispositive inquiry in determining  
4 whether a right is clearly established is whether it would be clear to a reasonable officer that his  
5 conduct was unlawful in the situation he confronted." *Id.* at 201-02 (quoting *Anderson v.*  
6 *Creighton*, 483 U.S. 635, 640 (1987)). Although *Saucier* required courts to address the questions  
7 in the particular sequence set out above, courts now have the discretion to decide which prong  
8 to address first, in light of the particular circumstances of each case. *See Pearson v. Callahan*,  
9 129 S. Ct. 808, 818 (2009).

10 Here, *Procurier v. Martinez* provides the relevant clearly established law on a prisoner's  
11 First Amendment rights vis-a-vis outgoing mail. It was clearly established that the confiscation  
12 of Harrison's outgoing mail would have been justified only if it (1) "further[ed] an important  
13 governmental interest unrelated to the suppression of expression," and (2) was "no greater than  
14 necessary or essential" to protect the governmental interest involved. *Procurier v. Martinez*, 416  
15 U.S. at 413. Taken in the light most favorable to Harrison, the facts alleged would allow a  
16 reasonable jury to find a violation of his First Amendment right to send mail, as discussed in the  
17 section above rejecting defendants' argument that they are entitled to judgment as a matter of  
18 law on the merits of Harrison's claim.

19 Defendants urge that they are entitled to qualified immunity because, even if their conduct  
20 was found to be unconstitutional, it would not have been clear to a reasonable prison officer that  
21 such conduct was unlawful because they were acting in accord with the California Code of  
22 Regulations. However, the state regulations do not establish the existence or scope of the federal  
23 constitutional right and existing case law would suggest that compliance with state regulations  
24 – such as the broad ones here which allowed confiscation of any outgoing mail that had anything  
25 deemed contraband within the prison – would not shield a prison official from liability for  
26 constitutional violations. *See generally Cousins v. Lockyer*, 568 F.3d 1063, 1070 (9th Cir. 2009)  
27 (CDCR operations manual describing duties that, if performed, would have avoided the alleged  
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1 wrong to plaintiff, were irrelevant to qualified immunity inquiry because they did not establish  
2 a federal constitutional right); California Attorneys for Criminal Justice v. Butts, 195 F.3d 1039,  
3 1049-50 (9th Cir. 2000) (denying qualified immunity to defendants who interrogated suspects  
4 in violation of Miranda, notwithstanding training material permitting such interrogations and  
5 Supreme Court opinions allowing the use of such interrogations for impeachment). Defendants  
6 are not entitled to judgment in their favor on the qualified immunity defense.

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## CONCLUSION

9 For the foregoing reasons, defendants' motion for summary judgment is DENIED.  
10 (Docket # 38.) No later than **April 2, 2010**, the parties must file and serve case management  
11 reports indicating what discovery remains to be done, the amount of time needed for discovery,  
12 whether any further motions will be filed, when they will be ready for trial, and the expected  
13 length of the trial. The statements need not be jointly prepared.

14 Defendants must file and serve an answer to the complaint no later than **April 2, 2010**.  
15 See 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(g)(2).

16 IT IS SO ORDERED.

17 Dated: February 22, 2010

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SUSAN ILLSTON  
United States District Judge

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